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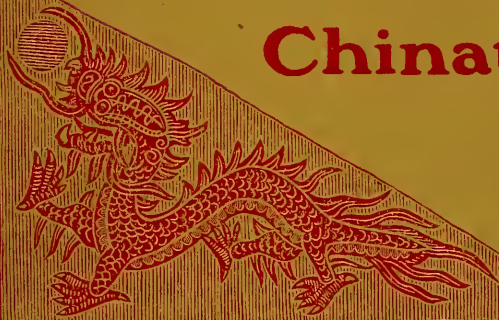




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# oo Lays of Chinatown

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By GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR







# LAYS OF CHINATOWN

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD MAJOR

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## PREFACE.

---

Oh, sweet Cathayan airs released  
To waft the odors of the East,  
While sheening silks and jeweled shoes  
The Orient's further charms transfuse;  
Of such my radiant childhood dreamed—  
With such my expectation teemed—  
    So fair, I read, was Chinatown.

Golden legends of a place,  
    Tinkle, silvery bells!  
Full of romance, full of grace,  
    So the sybil tells.

\* \* \* \* \*

From sullen skies a cheerless rain  
That floods the half-choked gutter drain,  
And houses that for years have stood  
Ramshackle dens of brick and wood,  
Worn doors, uncurtained window-panes,  
And mucky streets and garbage lanes—  
    And this is—this—is Chinatown!

Pattering feet of Chinamen,  
    Holima, Ching-la;  
Ribald girls of Chinatown;  
    Joss! how foul they are.

Within the ever-swinging door  
The halls uncarpeted, where pour  
The pungent, sickening opium fumes  
From out the poorly furnished rooms,  
Where spots of gilt and red attest  
What dingy finery is the rest—  
In Chinatown, in Chinatown.

Raising Cain in Chinatown,  
Drink and dope and toss;  
Day and night are but a day,  
Not a God, but Joss.

The Joss, a paint-daubed idol pent,  
The third floor of a tenement  
Bedraped with faded silk and gold,  
Where wrinkled priests their service hold  
While barbarous drum and banjo's whine  
Wake thoughts infernal not divine—  
Within the fane of Chinatown.

Pictures of pagodas, too;  
Tea-fields stretching down  
Lumbering junks, and sampan boats—  
This is Chinatown.

And women old before their time,  
With faces cursed by drink or crime;  
From many opened casements peer  
At huddling Chinamen, who leer  
From doors of dens where gamblers meet  
Or dives or corners of the street—  
In tawdry, slattern Chinatown.

Calling out to sailor men:  
"Sailor mokki hi,  
Fightin' dlunk in Doyers stleet,  
China gel no li'."

Lays of Chinatown.





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## Lays of Chinatown

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### MR. CHUCK CONNORS' TOAST TO THE VICTOR OF SAN JUAN.

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A healt' ter yer, Teddy,  
A victor already.  
De Spaniards before yer don't know yer, old man;  
De brain an' de vigor  
Dat glow in yer figger,  
De courage an' brawn in yer jimdandy clan.  
'Twill be a wild meetin',  
A Kilkenny greetin',  
W'en ye're introjuced on de heights of San Juan.

I picter yer, Teddy,  
Yer scarce can stan' steady,  
A roused lion balancin' ready ter spring.  
Ter men of de Don set  
Ter parry yer onset,  
Yer rough broncho busters will not do a t'ing  
But ter shoot an' ter sabre,  
Ter club an' belabor  
Like devils an' madmen to sweep down dere wing.

For, we know yer, Teddy,  
W'en riled, slightly heady,  
A stone wall er *chevo der frees* would not stay  
De spur of a trocha  
Would be but a joke—a  
Mere burr ter a mustang ter prick on ter fray.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Wow! Nuttin' could curb yer,  
Sidestep er disturb yer.  
"Ter hell wid Spain's lobsters," I fancy yer say.

Up hill dashes Teddy.  
De bullets of lead he  
Despises as paper wads trun widout force;  
De shells dat burst near him  
Nor touch him nor queer him;  
De deat' of his broncho delays not his course.  
(If dat nag had his spirit,  
Or anyt'ing near it,  
De U. S. has lost dere a mighty good horse.)

In fallin', jumps Teddy;  
"Quick, foller me," said he,  
An' wavin' his sword, he runs on ahead, still  
Before him, behind him,  
Each side him, ter blind him,  
Were 't not fer his glasses, de dust of de hill  
Arises wid bullets  
From molehill an' gulleets;  
T'ough odders drop dead, sure, dey do him no ill.

De foe watches Teddy,  
Expectin' dat dead he  
Will tumble; but fellers, dat's not Teddy's game.  
De Spaniards, in fightin',  
Fire once upon sightin',  
An' den flee ter cover—retreat is no shame.  
If Teddy's polite, too,  
An' all his men right, too,  
Spain t'inks dey should battle exactly de same.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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But say! dey saw Teddy  
Keep on as dey fled, he  
Led on wid his men till dey reached de hilltop.  
In face of all firin'  
Dey charged still untirin',  
W'at t'ell who was wounded, no Yankee would stop.  
"De Devil is leadin',"  
De Dons clamored, pleadin'  
"If we don't vamoose, he will have a new crop."

So a healt' ter yer, Teddy,  
Whom we know already.  
Yer rough-housed de cops so w'en yer was wid us  
Dat I guess dat de fact is  
Yer got inter practice  
Right here how ter handle yer dukes in a fuss.  
We'n yer trun down de Boss, sure  
Yer de slickest dat was, sure  
Yer would make Weyler look t'irty cents in a muss.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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STEVE BRODIE, ESQ., SOLUS.  
DE BOWERY.

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Oh, de Bowery's not fastidyus; dere ain't no such t'ing  
as dirt.

An' a bloke's full-suit in summer dere is pants, an'  
shoes, an' shirt.

An' a lady dresses likewise, changin' pants inter a skirt—  
But dey live up ter de limit on de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,  
Swaller-tails a breach of peace,  
An' a biled shirt calls "perlice,"  
An' an overcoat er vest—

Only's good ter hock at best—  
Dey allow no such frivol'ty on de Bowery.

De Bowery is no place fer saints, I scarcely need relate,  
An' de Ten Commandments dere are judged as stric'ly  
out of date.

An' de maxims of Sassiety have very little weight  
From de fust unter de last place on de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,  
Oh! no boys nor girls are dere—  
On de level, dis is square—

All de kids are men an' wimmen,  
Tough and alwuz fightin' trim in;  
Oh! dey alwuz welcomes trouble on de Bowery.

Dere are fakirs on de Bowery, too, an' touts of every  
kind,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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An' pullers-in ter kindly help yer make up yer own mind;  
An' t'eeves ter clean yer pockets out, if t'ree sheets in de  
wind—

An' de ladies are persistent on de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,  
Ah! de girls don't dress so well,  
P'rhaps, as duz de up-town swell;  
But dey love yer twice as kindly,  
An' dey see yer errors blindly—

Oh! de warmest babies now are on de Bowery.

An' de beer saloons are flashin' wid dere gran' electric  
lights,

W'ere yer see de wimmen's pictures an' sometimes some  
dandy fights;

An' dere's food an' drink an' lodgin' on de snowy winter  
nights,

If ye has de price ter pay upon de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,  
If yer has de price ter pay  
All de night dere yer can stay;  
But if so yer cannot treat,

“Get ter hell inter de street”—

Is de bouncer's invitation on de Bowery.

Oh! de life is free an' easy, an' yer never need no card

Ter introjuce yerself unter a lady er a pard.

“W'y, certainly, we'll drink wid yer; well, here is our  
regard,”

Is de formula fer glad han's on de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,  
'Tis, “Well, now, it's up ter me—

W'at is your's agoin' ter be—

An' w'at are yer drinkin', John?”

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## Lays of Chinatown

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So until yer money's gone,  
An' yer find yer watch is pinched upon de Bowery.

Oh! dey don't live ter old age upon de Bowery; fer, yer  
see,

Dere way of life is not conducive ter longevity;  
But dere's fun in every minute, an' it's alwuz wild an'  
free.

An' deat' is just an incident on de Bowery.

On de Bowery, on de Bowery,

P'rhaps yer frien's dey all chip in

Fer de undertaker's tin,

Er yer go ter Potter's Fiel's,

Er on dinky little w'eels,

Ter de tables of de doctors from de Bowery.



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## Lays of Chinatown

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### THE DYING GLADIATOR.

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“ Say, Chimmie, dis is Deat’, I t’ink.  
De place is growin’ dark ter me.  
Ah! take me out beneat’ de sky,  
P’rhaps in Gawd’s sunlight I can see.  
Ah, dat was no fair, stan’-up fight;  
De Dago cut me wid a knife.  
I’d knocked de stuffin’ outer him,  
If he’d fit fair, yer bet yer life.

“ No, no, dere is no hope for me;  
I know dis weakness w’at it is.  
Say, w’en yer take de message home,  
Jim, break it kindly unter Liz.  
Give ’er me love—’taint worth fer much;  
Ol’ man, I never wuz much use.  
Tell ’er I’m sorry—she’ll know w’at—  
It wuzn’t me, it wuz de booze.

“ Dey’ve rung up fer de amberlance,  
Dey’ve sent some one ter get de priest;  
But, say, dey’ll bot’ get here too late—  
I know dis breat’ will soon have ceased.  
Say, Jim, I wonder w’en we dies  
If dat’s de finish of de game?  
I wudn’t want ter live again  
If I wuz jus’ ter be de same.

“ Say, ol’ man, ditl yer ever pray?  
No, Jim, I will not lose me grip.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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W'at comes, I give it ter yer straight,  
I'll stand it wid stiff upper lip.  
But, on de level, now, I t'ink  
I've really never had a chance,  
Fer I have lived upon de street  
Since fust I wore a pair of pants.

“I wonder, now, w'at God is like  
(Here, hol' me head upon yer arm).  
I don't t'ink He will be too hard  
On one who never did Him harm.  
Say, if dere really is a hell,  
It can't be worse dan Chinatown.  
I've had ter fight fer bread ter eat,  
An' all me life I have been down.

“Say, w'ere dat Dago cut me, Jim,  
It burns as if I wuz on fire.  
I can't breat'e easy—p'rhaps I cud  
If yer wud lift a little higher.  
No whisky now—'twon't do no good.  
I can't see nothin' as I die.  
Remember, say ter Liz, fergive.  
Speak ter de boys—say, Jim—Good-by.”

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## Lays of Chinatown

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MR. CHUCK CONNORS SINGS "DE PUSH  
AT CONEY ISLAN'."

---

Oh, de trick of Coney Islan'  
Dat yer cannot trump elsewhere—  
'Tis no charm of sand nor ocean,  
Nor de balm of sea-salt air,  
Nor de bending dome of Heaven  
Dat hangs sheer o'er depths of space—  
Fer from Tybee ter Bar Harbor  
'Tis de same in every place.

'Tis de livin' panorama of de Islan'—  
'Tis de breathin' poster-picture of de Islan'—  
'Tis de laughin',  
'Tis de quaffin',  
'Tis de laughin', quaffin', chaffin',  
Of de crowds dat makes de trick of Coney Islan'.

In de burnin' days of summer,  
When yer feel de quiverin' heat  
Parch de atmosphere around yer,  
An' de glistenin' city street ;  
Der is healt' an' strengt' an' rapture,  
Den ter steal an hour away,  
W'ere de sands of Coney Islan'  
Show der varied world at play.

Oh, de flashin' arms an' legs of lovely women ;  
Oh, de frank, revealin' garbs of graceful women—

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## Lays of Chinatown

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De abandon  
Dere de sand on,  
De abandon grand on sand on  
Public spots of long-haired, star-eyed, lithe-limbed  
women.

Oh, de joyous sense of freedom  
From de trammels we have wrought—  
How unnatural Life's conventions,  
How anæmic Culture's t'ought;  
Here we doff our civilization  
Fer a pagan revelry,  
In a merry dance an' frolic,  
Ter de chimin' of de sea.

In de picturesque abandon of de Islan'—  
In de ancient Grecian frankness of de Islan'—  
In de swirlin',  
An' de whirlin',  
An' de swirlin', whirlin', twirlin',  
Of de dance an' drink an' drama of de Islan'.

How holler an' unreal  
Is de dignity of man  
In de freedom of a garden—  
So de human race began.  
Many artificial pleasures  
Man has taught hisself since den,  
But when seekin' real enjoyment  
Den he lapses wild again.

Hence he seeks de Grecian frankness of de Islan'—  
Of de posin' disrobed women of de Islan'—  
De laughin' an de quaffin',  
An' de swirlin', whirlin', twirlin'  
In de dance an' drink an' drama of de Islan'.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### CHUCK DINES AT DENNETT'S.

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I wuz eatin' onct in Dennett's—I ain't stuck upon de feed.  
If a man wuz empty stummicked, 'taint de kind of joint  
he'd need.

W'en yer haven't got an appetite, w'y, den, give it a call,  
'T'ough de under w'eatcakes often is, indeed, almighty  
small.

But dis I do attribute ter de framed religious verse—  
W'en dey feed bot' soul an' body, den de body gets de  
worse.

But, say, de girls are peaches; say, dey're really out of  
sight.

Wid dinky lace upon der heads an' aprons spick an' white.  
But it seems ter me as out er place, ter read above yer head,  
Dat if one trusted in de Lord, he wud be clo'ed an' fed;  
An' immedytly beneat' it, like de Bible pounder's notes,  
Dat de owner of de beanery wouldn't stan' fer stolen coats.

All de girls at night is chased, an' den de waiters all is  
men;

An', in course, 'taint so invitin' fer ter go an' eat dere den.  
But de time dat I refer ter wuz upon a rainy night,  
An' I ordered tea an' sinkers from a waiter imperlite.  
De t'ing dat made him buggy, but w'ich den I didn't  
know,

Wuz de men at de nex' table, dey had roasted him as  
slow.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Two frien's wuz sittin' facin', called by Frenchy *vis-à-vis*,  
An' I didn't give a t'ought to dem, an' dey gave none  
ter me.

I wuz readin' of de motto o'er me head w'ose words  
were dese,

"Dat if I pleased de Lord, He'd send prosperity an'  
peace"—

W'en suddenly be'ind me, dere wuz somet'ing tumbled  
o'er,

'Twuz a fallen cup of coffee, an' it smashed upon de floor.

Den I turned an' saw de waiter stan' a moment in dismay  
Wid his arm chock full of "ham an'," "beef an',"  
'taters, bread—well, say,

He named de man be'ind me, but it did his mot'er shame,  
An' he lifted up de "ham an'" and he soaked him wid de  
same ;

Den de "beef an'," den de 'taters, den de plate of bread  
—me word,

But dat waiter in a temper wuz a dandy an' a bird.

But wedder 'twuz his anger or because he wuz no good  
At hittin' bull's-eyes, peggin' dem wuz but a waste of  
food.

He didn't hit de man onct, but de ketchup bot' he struck,  
An' den de oil, den vinegar, den odder table truck;

He smashed dem, an' dere insides ran de shinin' table  
o'er,

An' formed a red an' gummy pool like blood upon de  
floor.

Den de man got up an' fetched de waiter one between de  
eyes,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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An' wid his other hand he followed up de fust surprise.  
Den a half a dozen waiters left dere tables in a rush,  
An' flung themselves ter help de fust an' get inter de push;  
An' nex' his frien' jumped up ter give ter him a helpin'  
    han',  
An' dey fou't and cursed an' yanked each odder 'round  
    ter beat de ban'.

I wuz hemmed in in de corner, an' I grabbed de nearest  
    chair,  
Alt'ough a tex' just oppersite tol' me ter trust ter prayer;  
But I knew dat wid dat chair if I shud hit a man a t'ump,  
He'd lay a-bodderin' no one on de floor all in a lump.  
Dey surged an' splurged until I riz me chair ter join de  
    fray,  
W'en dey knocked de table over an' all tumbled from me  
    way.

Well, say, 'twas fun—de sugar-bowls, de salt, an' castors  
    flew;  
Dey all wuz spilled upon de floor, an' several waiters, too.  
An' den two p'licemen hustled in an' den de fun wuz  
    stopped;  
But not until a waiter quick beneat' a night-stick dropped.  
W'ot'ell!—a little mob like dat a cop w'o comes ter pinch,  
Say, wid dat wicked club of his he has a lead-pipe cinch.

Dey locked de doors upon us. Fust, I t'ought we'd all  
    be jugged.  
De men declared 'twus waiters fust, de waiters dem dat  
    slugged;  
De men dey wuz all right, t'ough; say, seven waiters had  
    black eyes,



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## Lays of Chinatown

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Alt'ough dey tore de fellers' coats; but dey wuz plucky  
guys.

I don't know how it ended, for de p'lice unlocked de  
door,

An' I bolted wid de odders, say, an' no one paid his  
score.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### SPEECH OF THE LEADER OF THE INSURRECTION IN MISS BROWN'S CLASS.\*

---

Say, fellers, on de level, now,  
Dis poetry makes me sick ;  
But I've a bluff upon de guys  
I t'ink will take de trick.  
We ain't no tremblin' sissy kids,  
Like little Fauntleroy,  
Ter learn dese woozy dinky rhymes  
About de mudder's boy.

Dat kid upon de burnin' deck—  
Now, wasn't he a guy  
Ter stay an' get hisself burned up?  
Such fellers ought ter die.  
An' him, too, in Excelsior ;  
Such crazy blokes, I t'ink,  
Are 'nuff ter make a fellow tired  
An' drive a man ter drink.

Ah, w'at's dis guff dey're givin' us?  
'Tis only fit fer girls,  
Or mamma's little darlin' pets  
In velveteen an' curls.

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\*The Board of Education having ordered that every school-child be taught a poem each month, one class in a down-town school indignantly refused to waste time acquiring such frivolous erudition.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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W'y don't dey teach us livin' t'ings  
About de Bowery. See?  
W'ere Rummager blacked Sallie's lights,  
Dat wud be poetry.

Dey talk about de gran' ol' man—  
Dat must be John L., sure;  
He'd whip Jim Corbett yet, yer bet,  
If he'd de Keeley cure.  
W'y don't dey write out useful rules,  
Dose literary chaps,  
Of how ter use yer digits best,  
Or how ter win at craps?

If dey must sing of heroes on  
Dere hifalutin' lyres,  
W'y don't dey tell about de men  
W'at save our homes from fires?  
Ah! dey are heroes, too, fer keeps;  
Dis ain't no ragtime joke;  
Dey'd let demselves all burn ter bits  
Ter save a kid from smoke.

Dat book dey call Longfellow; say,  
Now, don't yer b'lieve a word.  
I axed me ol' man t'other night  
If he of him had heard.  
He said Longfellow wuz a horse—  
Say, dat most knocked me flat—  
He wuz no writin' guy at all:  
Now, w'at yer t'ink of dat?

I'm goin' ter write de Board meself,  
An' tell dem to smoke up.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Dey ought ter read Chuck Connors' song  
About dad's brindle pup.  
Dere's horse-races an' prize-fights, too,  
An' pool an' chips an' craps,  
An' fires ter write of—Hully Gee !  
Dey'll change dat rule, perhaps.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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*A letter from a resident of the Bowery, the "black sheep"  
of a prominent family, to his brother at  
the Waldorf-Astoria:*

DEAR VAN:

You'll say the change is ill  
From Murray Hill to Cherry Hill,  
And quote th' advice of Lampson-Locker  
To cultivate the Knickerbocker;  
But pass poor folks on t'other side  
A la' the Levite in his pride,  
Though well you know that often sure  
I cannot pass or rich or poor  
(Which recollection makes me think  
I need just now another drink).  
I'm writing this from Colligan's,  
The prince, indeed, of publicans;  
For John has beer so rich and good  
It is a sort of natural food.  
And ale so musty, old and prime,  
To spill a drop would be a crime,  
And gin and brandy superfine;  
But oh, his whiskey is divine,  
So ripe with age, through wood so mellow,  
'Twould make a churl a genial fellow,  
Unite the bitterest foes that quarrel,  
With not a headache in a barrel.  
Nor that damned 4 A. M. insomnia  
That rings the boy with ice to come near.  
Ah, many a festive hour I've spent,  
Nor cared how slow the moments went,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Here, by the tables in the rear,  
Unseen to see, unheard to hear;  
To watch outside the pelting rain,  
Or snow or slush of winter's train,  
The horses, with their lumbering load,  
The trains of th' elevated road,  
The jangle of the cable car,  
And then the motley crowd that jar  
And jostle this o'ercrowded place,  
Of every sort, of every race.  
The pig-tailed Chinaman, the Jew,  
The Lascar, Jap, and Arab, too—  
The sailor home from foreign seas,  
The soldier with a day's release,  
The business man, the natty clerk,  
The bloated tramp, disdaining work,  
And now and then a dainty form  
That braved discomfort of the storm,  
From out whose upraised skirt would gleam  
A leg a sculptor's sleep might dream.  
Ah! Van, you know I've had my part in  
The balls of Mrs. Bradley-Martin;  
They're only different in degree  
To those not in Society.  
There's wit as deep and fun as hearty  
Here in a Fourth Ward mixed ale party—  
In both, however, fops may prate, sure  
There's much of common human nature.  
The sole distinction it is clear,  
Is that between champagne and beer.  
This in a stein, that in a flagon,  
But at the end both get a jag on,  
And in a parlor or an attic,  
Once drunk, all men are democratic.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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I write this merely to remind  
That my allowance is behind,  
And though I am your only brother  
And father's death precludes another,  
You scarcely would delight to see  
Among your other callers, me,  
Since I have grown a trifle shabby  
And often drunk and always gabby,  
Then for the hint I here express  
Pray mail it to my new address,  
And to escape the dubious honor  
To see in *propria persona*  
Your brother,

Jacob Vander-blank,  
(Alias, locally, "Der Tank").



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## Lays of Chinatown

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### McPHERSON.

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McPherson was a blackguard and a gentleman in one,  
And nothing ever staggered him that promised any fun ;  
He loved all men as brothers and he loved their sisters,  
too,  
And he ruined all the others when he shipped upon the  
crew.

And in port the Bos'n said  
Of the person named McPherson,  
Never, boys, by him be led—  
Never let him go with you ;  
What you see him do don't do—  
Where you see him go don't go—

So you'll keep from staggering bodies and from broken  
heads, I know.

If the pure in heart see God alone, McPherson ne'er will  
see Him ;  
If one must for all oaths atone, I would not wish to be  
him—  
But where'er on Earth he dwells he is debtor to much  
pleasure,  
And 'twill take some pangs of Hell's to weigh down the  
brimming measure.

For this was philosophy  
With the person named McPherson :  
“ Death will be the end of me,  
And no pockets are allowed  
In the bosom of a shroud—

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Then no whisky will be good.  
Drink now, hearty," said McPherson. "Life's for kisses,  
drink and food."

The middy was the person led the vessel's joking clan.  
"In port," declared McPherson, "I will make that boy a  
man"—

Which meant that in the city he would show him all the  
sights,

And reveal to him (the pity !) of the mystery of Nights.

Oh, the mystery of Nights—

Day is open, but there's no pen

Can describe the tranced delights

Of red Bacchus and Silenus,

And the flower-bud-bosomed Venus,

Where the Gorgon's face peers in—

And the Youth with parching lips first greets the scorch-  
ing mouth of Sin.

The ship from Nagasaki now was anchored at Foochow,  
And McPherson at the twilight—"Hark!" he said,

"there'll be a row ;

I will go ashore, no matter though the orders are to stay,  
But the city's smell and clatter draw me cityward to stray.

There is old Pagoda Island,

And the color growing duller

Of the river toward the dry land—

We will sneak aboard a sampan,

And we soon will be a-trampin'

Through the streets of old Foochow :

Will you go, too?" said McPherson, and the tar said,

"Then or now."

Then hidden in a sampan, as McPherson showed him how,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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The middy soon was trampin' with him up and down  
Foochow—

With lantern-lit pagodas showing from each point of  
sight,  
And drinking brandied sodas till they both were bravely  
tight.

Oh, the China girls were gracious  
In carouses in tea-houses,  
And the time they had was spacious,  
And to celebrate the fun  
(As the worship was begun),  
With a sanctimonious air,

They knelt down in the Joss house to burlesque the pray-  
ing there.

The stolid Chinese, kneeling, scarcely seemed to note the  
pair,

Though the priests evinced their feeling by a long, sus-  
picious stare ;

Till, McPherson, perhaps less giddy, wearied on the farce  
to keep,

And turned unto the middy, but the youngster was  
asleep.

Fast and loud came slumber o'er him,  
With a giant most defiant,  
Of an idol just before him ;  
And upon the middy's right  
Squat, perhaps, a score in sight,  
In a semi-circular belt,

And McPherson kicked the middy prone among them as  
he knelt.

Oh, the scrambling and the jamming and the Babel  
caused thereby,

---

## Lays of Chinatown

---

With the Christians' vigorous damning and the heath-  
ens' "mokki hi!"

As the middy and McPherson madly, gladly, sought the  
door,

And knocked down every person who barred egress—  
near a score.

It was sport to see the sprinting  
Down the highways and the byways  
Of old Foochow in the glinting  
Of the moonshine and the stars,  
As the Chinks pursued the tars,  
Where the river rushes coldly,

And the sailors stopped a second, then sprang o'er the  
rampart boldly.

There the followers hesitated, standing timorous on the  
brink,

And, with Eastern patience, waited, hoping soon the  
two would sink;

But, with barbarous yells and screeching loud, they  
watched them grow remote,

And in final safety reaching, saw them climb in their boat.

There they both of them wert clapt in

The dark hutches and the clutches

Of the bos'n and the captain,

And their shore leave stopped while there;

But McPherson did declare,

"Though this prison is abhorred,

My boy, we spoiled the heathen, and are prisoners of  
the Lord."

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### THE SLUMMING PARTY.

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It was midsummer's night in Chinatown ;  
The sun for o'er an hour had sunken down  
From sight, but left a legacy of heat  
In panting tenement and scorching street;  
The air all breathless and so very still,  
The brooding hush, one thought of omened ill,  
Of waterspouts at sea and whirlwinds dire,  
The calm of Sodom ere the 'whelming fire ;  
Though now and then arose a shallow din,  
The noise of children, but far off and thin,  
Until there rolled along the echoing street  
The rumble of near carriage wheels, the beat  
Of quickly driven hoofs. "Now, don't yous stir,"  
Chuck Connors whispered to the Rummager,  
Who, with two friends, was lined up at the bar,  
And drinking whiskies with a generous tar.  
"I'll bet yous all anoder round of drinks  
'Tis some swell guys come down ter see de Chinks.  
Ah, dere dey are"—he pointed o'er the way ;  
"Dere goin' in ter see de Chinese play.  
Two ladies an' two gents"; then to the tar,  
"'Tis strange," he said, "how like all women are  
De same—all, weder bred on Cherry Hill  
Or Murray Hill, dey're de same corkers still.  
But not de men ; say, dose dudes are unplaced,  
Wasp-waisted, spindle-shanked an' baby-faced ;  
Just swaller tails, high collars an' gold canes,  
Dey are but tailors' dummies widout brains,  
Dere dinky steps like roosters wid de pip ;

---

## Lays of Chinatown

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Say, I cud lick six of dem at a clip.  
Dere lily han's dat smell of mignonette  
Or lavender—give me de men w'at sweat,  
W'ose han's are good fer workin', w'o know how  
Ter break in horses, er kin mow er plough;  
Men w'o kin use de trowel er de pick,  
An' brave de sun widout dere fallin' sick;  
Men w'o kin work de ingin, furl de sail,  
An' climb de masthead widout growin' pale;  
Men w'o do somet'in', men of nerve an' grit,  
W'o kin speak wid dere fists w'en dey are hit:  
Dudes are not men; I'd rader be a tramp,  
An' breat' Gawd's sunshine an' de cold an' damp—"  
Just here the door oped softly, and from thence  
Slunk in a member of his preference.  
"Sneak out," he cried, "yer misbegotten cub,  
Er else I'll break yer face in wid me club.  
Giv yer a drink? say, now, widout de price,  
I wudn't even give ter yer—advice!  
So sneak—"

Meanwhile, grown weary of the play,  
The slumming quartette left and drove away  
Up Doyers street to Pell, then stopped the wheel  
To taste chop suey and a Chinese meal.  
Passing the Mission—at the open door  
A militant Christian woman stood who wore  
The garb of the Salvation Army's blue,  
Who turning indoors voiced a Christian's view,  
"'Tis strange that any eye can pleasure see  
In degradation, sin and misery;  
What can allure a girl in innocence reared  
In trembling wrecks or eyes by evil bleared?  
From such un pitying hearts and shallow minds

---

## Lays of Chinatown

---

His poor recruits the Devil ever finds.  
Those who without disgust Sin's orgies see  
Have gone half way to join Depravity.  
Apply the spur of Want, Temptation's snare,  
And all their virtue melts into vague air ;  
God pity them, and Jesus save us all,  
How close who stand are kin to those who fall."

Next to the dives—the time at last is ripe  
To see its wretched victims "hit the pipe."  
A guide secured whose presence would allay  
The fear that these sightseers might betray  
All to a dismal, gaunt apartment trace  
The way and note the mean, unfurnished place,  
Uncarpeted the floor, and curtainless  
Those windows where no baby fingers press,  
But doubly barred and doubly barred the door,  
While shoes and coats and waistcoats strew the floor,  
And skirts and corsets, while the owners snore  
In pairs—heads pillowed on the breast or trunk—  
In beds placed tierwise, rising bunk o'er bunk,  
Like berths on some Atlantic liner's side.  
The women lost to shame and dead to pride,  
Heedless what charm exposed to eyes of lust,  
The stockinged leg, bare arm and rhythmic bust,  
Resenting but one interdicted she—  
Th' unwilling homage Vice pays Purity.  
Who was this She? Oh, know by the remark  
One girl half whispered in the clouding dark  
To her near neighbor while they waited till  
The Chinese cooked the sputtering opium pill,  
"Say, Mag, who are those women in this place  
To flaunt their damned cold virtue in our face?  
Is it not pain enough for those who err



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## Lays of Chinatown

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To think of what we are and what we were,  
But they must come with scornful eye to see  
As we were beasts in some menagerie?  
Lost, as we are, without a tie or claim,  
Whom no one good can mention without shame,  
God's most defenceless creatures, even at will  
The bum may spit on us, yet women still  
Bruise us—does not the wound turn black and blue?  
Do we not feel cold, heat, the frost, the dew,  
Hunger and foot-ache? We, Life's forlorn hope,  
With no friends save the liquor and the dope.  
Ah, they come here in rags of Virtue dressed  
To make our nakedness a show—a jest,  
But draw their skirts away and close the eye  
If in their churches one of us draws nigh."

Unconscious of remark, the slummers passed  
Into the street and reached the Joss-house last—  
Up squalid stairways till they saw his shrine,  
And scoffed the rites the heathen deemed divine.  
Then they drove home, but harmed more in a night  
The heavenly cause than preachers could set right  
In many months, as e'er the thoughtless tongue  
Can sting, but never soothe the spirit stung.  
But so the pagans judge, if Christians knew,  
And hate the Christ for wrongs His followers do.



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## Lays of Chinatown

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### OLD JOE'S STORY.

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Old Omar never jotted down  
A single thought of Chinatown  
(But Chinatown is even sure  
It never heard of Naishäpür).  
And still, unless my census errs,  
Old Omar has more worshipers  
In Chinatown—alas, the pity!—  
Than ever lived in his own city.  
And these old Joe leads easily first  
With his unplumbed phenomenal thirst.

'Twas in McColgan's, warm and bright,  
Upon a snowy, blust'ry night,  
That Joe reeled in, his usual jag on,  
And begged of us a sobering flagon.  
For he had been, he cried aghast,  
With force pedalic streetward cast  
From every bar where liquor lurks,  
From Pig's Foot Kelly's to McGurk's.  
Then, sitting down—the drink was good—  
Joe warmed in reminiscent mood,  
And earned a generous pledge of ale  
By telling us the following tale :

(Ah ! I remember with what awe  
We gazed at Joe's insatiate maw,  
And wondered if he was a true man,  
Blessed with a stomach merely human,  
That could contain yet without bursting

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

The seas he poured in in his thirsting,  
That let him live, despite the warning  
Of leech and clergy night and morning,  
Like Bowery bummers, from whose skin  
Whisky alone perspires, or gin.  
It almost makes my mind agree  
With his bibulous philosophy,  
Who, when the sweet girl missionary  
Besought him from his ways to vary,  
And told him (this was once in Sidney)  
How drink would ruin heart and kidney;  
"Ruin"—the thought even now unnerves him—  
"Why, bless your soul, ma'am, it preserves 'em;  
I've drank it forty years," said Joe,  
"And really think I ought to know."

This was his tale: In days of old,  
When men first mined Australian gold,  
Joe, by his restless spirit undone,  
Sailed from his native port of London,  
And finally joined th' adventurous throng  
From Ballarat to Mount Korong,  
And staking there a paying claim,  
Acquired a certain local fame.  
'Twas known beyond the diggings' bounds  
That Cockney washed a thousand pounds.

One day a Bushman of the place  
Sang praises of his Loubra's grace,  
Which kindled Joe's romance to life,  
He paid a pound to share the wife.  
Don't start, prim reader, at Sin's ravage,  
Nor tag a moral on the savage,  
'Tis not confined to wild men solely.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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So Byron dealt with Guiccioli ;  
And, really, Joe had more excuse—  
The place, the time, the laws were loose ;  
And as Korong in primitive days  
Scarce offered Christian maids a place,  
The guileless aborigines  
Must be the substitutes for these.  
And if their dusky lords were willing  
T' allow this polyandrous billing,  
It seemed outside another's sphere  
Or to object or interfere  
In these wild places, where one's cares  
Were limited to his own affairs,  
He soon had been in Charon's bark hearsed  
Who there had played the part of Parkhurst.

The night of assignation came,  
And Joe set out, his heart aflame ;  
A chioke grove a mile or so  
Beyond them had been named by Joe.  
The prospect stretched so undulating,  
The moonlight shone so penetrating  
As e'er Australian heaven shines.  
Joe almost saw it from the mines.  
But as he hurried on, his thought  
A certain tinge of romance caught ;  
This lady there awaiting him  
Was young and not too tall, but slim ;  
And he could dream her black eyes shine  
Like stars seen from the lowest mine ;  
Her rose-red lips that pout, inviting  
His lips' soft ravage upon sighting ;  
Her cheek, though rather dark than fair,  
Yet such from too bold sun and air

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## Lays of Chinatown

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That, dallying near her fond and free,  
Had tanned her blush there constantly.  
Such was the lady of his fancy,  
“Whom I, alone,” he thought, “now can see.”

But, oh, how different was the truth—  
Which proves them heretics in sooth  
To love's imperious orthodoxy,  
Who take, or woo, or wed by proxy.  
Instead of being tall and thin,  
As drawn his partial revery in,  
A woman short and squat and fat,  
Turk-fashion on a tree-stump sat;  
Her face a liberal pitting bore  
Of smallpox, and one eye was sore.  
She ran to paunch, as females do,  
Of woman there or kangaroo,  
And blacker in her general hue  
Than e'en the gloss on Joseph's shoe:  
And smoked, which Joe thought rather rude e'en  
In a boor, the rankest dudeen.  
Joe for a moment stood aghast,  
And next a look of anger cast  
At pipe and smoker, then with oath:  
“You bloody Loubra,” smote them both.  
The pipe was smashed, the woman fell  
And lay prone, uttering yell on yell,  
That quicker than I can describe  
Brought half a dozen of her tribe—  
Her husband leading. Joe deemed flight  
Was wiser than unequal fight,  
And sped on 'mid derisive laughter  
From all the Bushmen following after.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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But short the time ere Joe divined  
A gaining foe was close behind,  
Then felt on coat and waistcoat band  
The impress of a vicelike hand.  
With sudden frenzy and surprise,  
He turned and smote between the eyes;  
The Bushman fell, but yet the grasp  
Was steel, refusing to unclasp.  
With mighty wrench and maddened twist  
Joe left the garments in his fist,  
But felt his shirt a raveled wreck,  
Torn from the bottom hem to neck,  
Which, floating winglike from behind,  
Seemed flags of truce borne on the wind.

With added wings he flew, and then  
A panting pagan stretched again,  
And with some skill—I know not how, sirs—  
Tore off the belt that held his trousers;  
The coverings from their fastenings slipt,  
Embraced his feet, and down he tripped.  
So close the enemy did pursue  
Joe's fall struck prone the follower, too.  
But here the white man's better brain  
Proved well its trained superior strain;  
His trousers, by a nimble kick,  
Flew off, and to his feet as quick,  
While yet the Bushman groaning lies,  
A moment shackled by surprise.  
Again they're off! Joe reached the road  
That stretched straight to his own abode,  
A dozen yards ahead at least  
His agile thought his lead increased,  
The only piece left of his suit  
His pennant flying shirt and boot.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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[I merely hint as hereon bearing  
The running comment of his swearing  
An artist he in objurgation!  
Invoked impartially damnation  
Upon his eyes, upon his soul,  
On all between him and his goal,  
On Loubra and her lord; the others  
With disrespect unto their mothers.  
No fisher wives of Billingsgate  
Could keep with him an equal rate,  
And rowdies fighting in Whitechapel  
With strings of oaths obscene may grapple;  
But none more blasphemy could carry  
Than Joe's profane vocabulary,  
With which the shuddering air might well  
Feel laden with a blast from Hell.]

The Bushmen now gave up the race;  
Too nearly drawn the miners' place;  
But Joe kept on his sprinting form,  
Not to escape, but to keep warm.  
The naked Indian in a race  
Ne'er kept, indeed, a faster pace,  
Nor Lishmahago on the ladder  
Appeared more ludicrous or madder;  
Though naught he recked of clothing lost,  
Nor jokes to-morrow at his cost.  
But thanked his stars that home was near,  
Without a further risk to fear,  
When, lo! before his door there stood  
A sight that froze his very blood:  
His landlady was standing there  
To breathe awhile the cooling air;  
The prim, precise and puritanic,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Now paralyzed by very panic;  
And he could in the inner hall see—  
A statue, too, from nervous palsy—  
The girl he would have risked a life,  
And gladly, to have made his wife.

Joe swore with double desperation,  
But still kept toward his destination.  
“Turn round, turn round,” he cried, “ye bitches,  
Why, don’t yer see I’ve lost my breeches;”  
His one sole thought to gain his room  
And hide his blushes in its gloom.  
So madly on his way he tore—  
He brushed his sweetheart to the floor,  
And stopping not t’ express contrition,  
With one last bound he forced admission.  
Once there, in frenzied haste he chose  
And clad himself again in clothes.  
Then bundled into his portmanteau  
Whatever he could lay his hand to,  
And waiting till the household slept,  
On tiptoe down the stairway crept.  
Then on the glistening roadway that  
Stretched weary miles to Ballarat  
So quickly did our hero fly  
He had not time to wish good-by,  
But left there owing several sovereigns  
To his landlady at McGovern’s.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### FLOTSAM AND JETSAM. A BOWERY TRAGEDY.

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#### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COL. BLANK.

LIEUT. DASH.

FRIEDA.

SHRENY RACHEL.

LIBBIE THE MAN.

TWO BYSTANDERS AND WAITERS.

Scene—McGurk's Saloon on the Bowery.

Time—Ten o'clock P. M. to midnight.

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*Col. B.*—Is this McGurk's? The handbills we received  
At Santiago held no mirror up  
Of the reality, but poster-like  
Has made a thing indifferent, vile and coarse  
Seem full of beauty and desire.

*Lieut. D.*— A lure  
Of drunken soldiers, and a spot to leech  
Unshaven sailors home from all the ends  
And corners of the globe.

*Col. B.*— How passing strange  
These slaves of Toil and Danger. So to sweat  
And dare the barbs of Accident and Death  
For months monotonous, then waste the gold,  
The guerdon of their labor, in a round  
Of senseless revelry in as many hours.

*Lieut. D.*—See that poor fool is giving all his silver  
To that worn drab—so friendly for a night,  
Unknown this noon, and gone before to-morrow.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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*Col. B.*—There is that in the fellowship of waves  
And constant peril that makes money base,  
As if sworn friends of Death should say, "With such  
As we the poor economies of Prudence,  
The anxious thought providing for to-morrow  
Is out of place, as all we have of time  
And money is the present—let us drain  
The cup of Pleasure deeply while we may."

*(Enter waiter.)*

*W.*—W'at's yer orders, gents?

*Lieut. D.*—Two beers.

*(Exeunt and returns with two glasses—  
half beer, half foam.)*

*Col. B.*—The girls—

You know them all?

*W.*—Indifferently well.

*Col. B.*—Who are those three?—the youngest still retains  
In looks some trace of early innocence.

*W.*—The one in black is Lib the Man—a fiend  
In anger—she has served the state—she threw  
A lighted lamp once at another girl,  
And nearly caused her death in flame. The Jewess  
Is Sheeny Rachel—thief as well as Cyprian;  
And the red-cheeked, blue-eyed and babe-faced doll.  
Is Frieda—somewhat new yet to the Bowery.

*Col. B.*—She has an eye through which a spotless soul  
Might peer with harmony.

*W.*—She has all virtue  
Save virtue. She knows Life's night side as well  
As any priest his prayer-book.

*Lieut. D.*—You yourself  
Have known a different life?

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## Lays of Chinatown

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W.— We all have here.

I entered in for holy orders once.

Col. B.—Unholy orders now.

W.— I'll introduce you.

Ladies, me frien's.

*(The three women come over and sit at the same table with the Col. and Lieut.)*

I'll take yer orders, too.

Frieda.—Say, waiter, mine's a cocktail.

*(The others order beers.)*

Col. B.—Don't you feel here unplaced?

Frieda.—I've done all dives from Albany to Buffalo,

And when I've done New York, I'm ripe for Hell.

*(The waiter, having fetched their several drinks, stands near while they drink.)*

Let's see, now, who can tell the nastiest story.

I will begin.

*(They all prove adepts. Liquor, smutty stories and suggestive stanzas follow in orderly [or disorderly] sequence. Even the white-aproned waiter listens with such zest as to forget to remind them to order. Frieda, unblushing and baby-faced, easily is champion in the Rabelaisian entertainment. Finally a bystander leaves suddenly at one of her stories, crying back from the door: "My stomach protests.")*

Frieda.—I wonder who invents these stories. Say,

I once could tell them from the time I woke

'Til midnight without even a repetition.

A Bystander (*rudely*).—You must be rotten.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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*Frieda* — Oh, there are much worse.  
I'm pretty bad, p'rhaps, but there are much worse—  
A pimp like you, for instance. Say, I think  
These stories are all founded on some fact  
Like scandal in their growth—  
Some incident must have happened at the first,  
And each relator adds embellishment  
Of phrase or feature, making apropos  
Or witty that which had in the beginning  
Only a kernel of the later humor.

*Col. B.*—Your speech betrays you new unto these scenes.

*Frieda.*—I can talk tough, too. See that blonde-haired  
girl?

She stole a chappie's diamond pin last night  
Up in the Tivoli. I would not do that.

*Bystander (sotto voce).*—Not yet.

*Frieda (overhearing him.)*—No, never! What's she  
doing here,

I wonder?

*Bystander.*— What are you?

*Frieda (rather loudly).*— Oh, seeing things.

Say, do you think because a girl is wayward  
She must, too, be a thief?

(*An elderly man interrupts from the  
next table, his face livid, bloated,  
smeared with the ashes of much dead  
pleasure.*)

All do when youth has fled. The fair flower dies,  
The plant grows less attractive, even if still  
The leaves smell sweet.

*Frieda.*— The root is dead in you,  
You reprobate old moralist in your cups.  
Why don't you count your beads. To your white  
hairs

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

Your leering face gives little honor—faith.

*The man.*—It is the same with all.

With yesterday all youth and beauty and  
A host of gay admirers, who shower wealth  
Upon you, as old Jove surrounded Danae.  
To-day the beauty somewhat overripe  
Shows tarnished, and the rich adorers seek  
Another shrine. To-morrow—ah! the rose  
Has rotted on its stem.—'Tis only booze.  
The lame, the blind and the ill-favored come  
Coarse, brutal, moneyless.—All these are thieves.  
'Tis Hogarth o'er again. The Tenderloin  
At first, with suppers gay and bright champagne;  
The Bowery next, and beer; then Chinatown,  
And dope; then Cherry Hill, and last—the river.

*Sheeny R.*—Don't speak ter de ol' croaker. Dere she  
goes—

Der blonde—so now forget it.

*Frieda.*—

Any way,

I don't like blondes—they never can be trusted.  
They're always cold and mercenary things  
In friendship, love or money.

*Libbie the Man.*—

Don't say dat.

Me sister is a blonde—here is her picture.

(*Taking from her bosom a photograph  
of a light-haired little girl.*)

*Frieda.*—Oh! ain't she cute.

*Sheeny R.*—Say, she's a peach. I've got a little kid  
Dat is her image.

*Libbie.*—W'at! Yer stringin' us.

Yer wit' yer mop of hair as black as Hell,  
An' eyes like coals.

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

*Sheeny R.*— Her fat'er's light enough,  
Wit' his blue eyes an' pinky cheeks—oh! damn him,  
He brought me here.

*Libbie.*— Say, tell us all about it.

*Frieda.*—Hell, no! What is the use. Here's fun!  
(*She drinks.*)

*Lieut. D. (to Frieda).*—How would you like to marry?

*Frieda.*— Guess I am

As much as Rachel.

*Sheeny R.*— Dat's what worries me.

W'at will de goil say w'en she's old enough  
Ter know about it? I would rat'er see her  
A corpse laid in her coffin dan ter know it.

*Frieda.*—A husband is all right. Say, but for me,  
No children. I would stand in terror of  
The deep taint in the blood. I wouldn't breed  
A girl child like myself. Say, do you think  
My mother should have been congratulated  
When I was laid first crying on her breast?

*Libbie.*— Ferget it.

Who's ordering drinks?

(*Another round is ordered, which the  
obsequious waiter fetches.*)

*Frieda (irrelevantly).*—Have you seen Lottie here?

*Libbie.*—No; nor yer won't. Her feller laid her up  
Fer a long week.

*Sheeny R.*— Oh, he's an ugly brute.

*Frieda.*—So are all men.

*Libbie.*— He caught her hittin' de pipe  
Wit' a lean Chink in Pell street. She is bruised  
From head to foot. Yer ought ter see her lamps;  
Dey're out of biz.

*Sheeny R.*— He lives on her, de pimp.

*Libbie.*—Dat's all we women are good fer—simple slaves—  
Ter keep a man—de master of our yout';

---

## Lays of Chinatown

---

Ter beat and kick us w'en he's in de mood,  
An' w'en we're old, discard us.

*Frieda.*— I would leave him.

*Libbie.*—Den he would kill her.

*Sheeny R. (suddenly).*— Say, girls, I mus' go.  
I haven't got me rent yet. Dere's a chance  
Dat hayseed has got money; let me touch him,  
An' I'll go home a winner.

(*Exeunt.*)

*Libbie.*— Would yer t'ink  
Dat twice de Sheeny tried ter kill herself.  
De stomach-pump's de only t'ing w'at saved her.  
But didn't she fight de doctors!

*Frieda (laughing).*—When I attempt the trick, there'll be  
no failure.

*Libbie.*—Yer kill yerself? Say, yer too happy-go-lucky  
Ter kill yerself; yer not of dat complexion.  
Dat's where yer head is level. It don't pay  
Ter take t'ings serious in dis business, nor  
Ter t'ink o' t'ings dat's over long ago—  
Fer first yer frien's will leave yer, fer de fellers  
All like a lively devil—den a girl  
W'o takes t'ings solemn-like soon gets disgusted  
Wit' life and wit' herself, an' ends it all  
Some day.

*Frieda (quietly).*—That's what I'm going to do myself.  
Look here.

(*Taking a little vial from her stocking.*)

No policeman 'll ever run me in alive.  
When I get tired, this is the route I'll take.

*Col. B.*—What is it?

*Frieda.*— Pure carbolic.

*Lieut. D.*— Why, I thought

That you were always happy.

*Frieda.*— Happy? I?

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

Do you men dream such cattle as we are  
Are ever happy? Why, I left a home  
Of elegant refinement. But, oh, Hell!  
Say, what's the use remembering. Here is fun!  
(Drinks.)

*Libbie.*—Well, say, I'm ready to be killed or kill  
Myself as soon as I can kill de feller  
W'at brought me here. I'm lookin' fer de chance;  
An' den I'll follow.

*Col. B.*— This is horrible.  
This crowd is getting too ghastly now for me.  
Come, Edward, let us move.

(*The two men leave the table. Silence falls upon the two women, and finally Libbie the Man arises and leaves the room. Frieda sits alone, watching the crowd. Three negro musicians stroll in with banjo and guitar, and the habitués hear them play and sing with enjoyment. New arrivals come and go—by midnight the place is full. Frieda moves over to a corner table, still alone. A clock in the neighboring steeple tolls the hour. Frieda arises and looks around. Then she walks to a far table where she sees Libbie the Man sitting with two sailors.*)

"Give me a drink?" she asks of one.

"Why, certainly; sit down."

"No, I will drink this standing."

(*The waiter brings her a foaming glass, and she turns around to blow off the froth.*)

"Here goes nothing," she says suddenly with a shriek, and falls to the ground. From one hand rolls an empty bottle, from the other smashes a beer glass.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### JACK AND MARY.

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In Greenwich village, while it yet could claim  
The homely charm of th' unambitious name,  
While yet the elevated road was new,  
An engineering marvel to the view,  
Ere yet the tenements' tall towering pile  
Shut out the sky's blue dome, the sun's glad smile,  
A boy and girl were born on the same day,  
The parents neighbors.—So it happened they  
Became acquainted soon as babies do  
Who first smile shyly when they meet, then coo,  
Then hiding in the mother bosom, peek  
But furtively—aye, long ere they can speak  
The innocent flirtation often shows  
Prophetic of the love that later grows.  
And as they grew they prattled at their play  
Of keeping house, or all the summer day  
In glassy plots with gold white daisies starred  
A making flowery chains or mud pies in the yard.  
Then later, heedless of his comrades' taunts,  
The world-wide punishment of boy gallants,  
He waited after school with dogged looks  
Outside the gate for girls to bring her books,  
Became her cavalier, her own true knight,  
Upheld her charms in many a doughty fight,  
Bold as a lion, walking hand in hand,  
The natural freedom of youths' fairyland,  
He called her "Mary"; she, not taken aback,  
As easily familiar, called him "Jack";  
Wrestled in play, or hid, although she knew



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## Lays of Chinatown

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As forfeit, when he found, he'd kiss her, too.  
Thus years flew by, and deeper still they wove  
Their spell, yet neither wist that it was Love.

Until one evening when the sun gone down  
Still cast a grace and glory o'er the town,  
As though the Day, a halo round his head  
Irradiate, hued the curtains of his bed,  
The purple folds, now glittering with gold,  
Now tawny yellow, glorious to behold,  
Now edged with pink, and now aflame with red,  
Then a warm grey, as Night her pinions spread,  
And like a brooding bird upon the nest  
Lulled Day to sleep and hushed the world to rest—  
'Twas such a night, when from his work returned,  
The thought to ask her hand within him burned.  
But lo! he found his tongue tied and his heart  
Tumultuous beating like the waves that part  
Love from all Hope. They walked the park and square,  
Linked arm and arm, like many couples there.  
But he felt chill in the warm, fragrant park,  
The merry laugh, the humorous remark,  
Both absent, till the wondering girl in jest  
Asked him what crime lay heavy on his breast;  
"Or, perhaps," she laughed, "'tis love." Then quickly he  
Turned to her bluntly, "Will you marry me?"

To which the girl, "There, you have spoiled it all.  
I wish we both our vain words could recall.  
I ne'er will wed with any one nor share  
The yoke of marriage—oh! I could not bear  
To sit at home long evenings while perchance  
My girl friends were rejoicing at the dance.  
I could not stand the housewife's dull routine—  
To sweep, to sew, to make the dishes clean,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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To mind a whining child—no, I must be  
To go and come as summer breezes free.  
I tire of one place soon, and of one friend.  
New scenes, new faces must new pleasures lend.  
Nature designed me for a different goal,  
And in my woman's body shrined man's strenuous soul."

So after further talk they parted—he  
To strive to live down love in agony;  
But she, though for the moment disconcerted,  
Ere the next night forgetting, gaily flirted  
The summer through with evening parties where  
The Hudson's ample breast gay revelers bare,  
Or moonlit walks where in some shady haunt  
Her beauty drew to her some new gallant,  
But seldom Jack, who could not bear to see  
The heartless trifling of her coquetry;  
And so until the snow's first heavy fall  
She went with a rich youth unto the ball,  
But came not back to ease her mother's fears  
That night, but let her worry still in tears  
All the next day until the twilight fell  
Ere she returned with a light laugh to tell  
How she had gone with a girl friend to stay,  
And being so tired, had slept the hours away,  
But had not dreamed her mother boded harm,  
'Twas foolish ever feeling such alarm.

But now her quiet friends began to say  
She went too often to the ball and play,  
And marvel from what golden source she drew  
To wear such dresses, gems and jewels, too.  
Somehow her laugh rang out unseemly loud,  
Her glance more bold than modesty allowed,

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## Lays of Chinatown

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Her hair grew daily yellower in tint,  
Her cheek of paint gave finally the hint;  
And oh! one morning from the ball she came,  
Uncertain in her steps—an open shame.

Her father, easy-going soul till now,  
Had credited what tale she might avow.  
But now he saw in her wine-reddened face  
The pathway she was treading to disgrace;  
And so, appalled, he strove to lay the law  
And firm control he should have shown before.  
But all too late, for an unheeded cold  
Now held him cobra-like in fatal fold,  
And on his helpless bed the daughter scoffed  
His good advice, and disobeyed him oft,  
So wayward grown that e'en the night he died  
She danced and spent it gaily from his side.

After the funeral, in her doubled grief,  
The mother sought for possible relief  
To save her daughter from the things that stung—  
The glance inquiring, and the gossip tongue—  
Removed her far off from the conscious throng  
And neighborhood where she had lived so long.

Jack found them, though—good, loving, faithful Jack—  
Whose love unworthiness could never slack,  
And first the mother, then the daughter, tried  
To gently urge the latter for his bride.  
With lover's words he cast the horoscope  
That hued the future with a larger hope,  
Held out to her his honest, manly arms,  
Protection sure against temptation's charms,  
His loyal, watchful heart, his loving breast,

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

Where she might place her head and feel at rest.  
But Mary still, though she no longer scoffed,  
As oft as offered her declined as oft;  
Aye, even with tears, declaring now that she  
Must bear in her own soul her misery,  
Must sail her life on its own chosen tide,  
Who was not fit for any good man's bride;  
Then lest she might be overurged she feared,  
One day she wrote farewell, and disappeared.

This Fortune's third became the final blow,  
The mother sank beneath her added woe,  
While Mary, all unconscious of her case,  
Fell lower still, enamored of disgrace,  
Wherein Jack found her after many a day  
Of weary search, but Love spurred on his way,  
While bearing, too, committed to his care,  
Her mother's dying blessing and her prayer.

'Twas in a drinking place where one may find  
The wretched, hopeless wrecks of womankind,  
Where fallen blacks consort with baser whites,  
And vile Chinese defile the lawless nights,  
She, as he entered, held unto her lip  
A half filled glass, and took a fiery sip,  
Then put it down as quickly, taken aback  
To see him enter, but she murmured "Jack."  
Her voice transformed the place—he saw no more  
Its wretched inmates and its filthy floor.  
He had but eyes for her, whom reaching he  
Enclasped and cried: "Now, you *will* marry me."  
Then gently told how long his wanderings were  
To bring a mother's message unto her,  
And as her tears bespoke a softened thought,

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

Again to go with him her promise sought,  
Claiming that this the great reward should be  
Of so much patient love and constancy.  
The weeping girl consented—to her room  
She brought him through the drug beclouded gloom,  
And hurriedly in her pitiful finery dressed  
(The neighboring pawnbroker held all the rest).  
She walked with him into the open air,  
Her face a-shower with tears, and then despair  
O'erwhelmed her as she trod the well known street.  
She raised a vial, drank its wine complete,  
And fell a-moaning faintly at his feet.

She lay all night unconscious in the ward,  
The white-capped nurses holding constant guard,  
But as day rose in the enkindling east,  
She woke, though sick to death, and called the priest.  
They sent for him and Jack. The curate heard  
Her last confession—spoke the pardoning word.  
Then Jack addressed him, and most briefly wove  
The story of his sorrow and his love.  
“Father, she must not die,” the lover cried,  
“Save as an honest woman and a bride.  
Speak to her, you, and bid her bear a name  
That will take from her tombstone every shame.”  
And so Jack held her hands, at last a wife,  
And death came holier, happier than life.

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## Lays of Chinatown

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### A CHINATOWN IDYLL.

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Near the triangle, where the dragon flag  
Waves o'er the yellow Tartar's vile abode,  
There stands a house in vigorous old age,  
Although built in the days the flute-voiced Cone  
Proclaimed with matchless eloquence God's grace.  
It and its brethren, still with their wide halls  
And noble rooms, remind of spacious times  
When wealth and beauty lived in stately grace  
Where now breeds squalor. In the rear, a yard,  
In summer green, with time defying box,  
A venerable tree that greets the spring  
With leafy welcome and a few pale blossoms  
That long have lost the art of bearing fruit  
(Like faded belles that seek to hide grey age  
With trick of dress and simulated youth),  
And some old-fashioned flowers laid out in plots,  
Pink bleeding hearts and fragile lady slippers,  
Blue larkspur, marigolds and four o'clocks  
That open when the delicate portulaca  
Have ceased their matin worship of the sun,  
So alien now to the surrounding scenes,  
The hideous tenements that wall it in,  
But cannot hide it from the vagrant bees  
And wandering butterflies. Within that house  
I had my office once.

The chamber faced  
The garden spot, and here on summer nights,  
The lights turned low, I loved to steal an hour  
After the worry of the tedious day,  
In cool pajamas, with the fragrant weed,

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

In hazy dreams of other days and scenes,  
Soothed by the moon's enchantment and the breeze.

On such a night a coal-black negress came,  
Pushing her voluble way against protests  
Of my Italian boy (a legal count  
From Padua, now by Poverty compelled  
To veil his title, drive me, tend the door  
And bar offenders out), and heedless all  
Of my embarrassment, strode in my room,  
Attended by a shambling apeline youth,  
Uncouth, abashed, a coppery yellow thing,  
With almond slanted eyes, amorphous hair,  
Part crinkled, partly straight.

“What do you want?”

I asked, and tried to diagnose the boy.  
“Come, doctor, come; she's dyin'; come at once!”  
“How long has she been dying?” I was used  
To such exaggeration of slight ills  
And strong insistence of needs paramount.  
“T'ree hours,” she answered unsuspiciously.  
“Oh, I'm too tired now; go get Jones,” I said;  
“He's always ready for a call in need.”  
(Dear Jones, true friend, and able doctor, too).  
“De Chink will pay yer well,” the negress said,  
“An' she wants yer, an' no one else will do.”  
Then like th' ungracious host of parable,  
To save verbose annoyance, I gave in.

'Twas but short walk. An old two-storied house  
In Park street, since torn down, was her abode.  
Up-stairs she lived, a Chinese paramour  
Responsible for her debts and for the boy,  
While on the first floor lived the invalid,



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## Lays of Chinatown

---

A white girl, with her swart Cathayan lover.  
Upon a squalid bed she lay a-moaning,  
In brief attire, and by her side, stretched mute,  
The Chinaman, a plate of fresh white grapes  
Between them, and an opium lamp and pipe  
And pills of the soul-killing drug at hand.  
In semi-circle, sitting by the bed,  
Were three or four poor wretches, women still.  
The first, a splendid animal with large  
And lustrous bovine eyes and milk-white skin,  
Addressed me: "Look at Maggie, doctor, now,  
'Twas Jim—yer know him—Jim, de Dood, w'at done it."

As I surmised, she had no serious harm,  
But sorely bruised—a black and swollen eye,  
A bleeding cheek, and one poor broken rib,  
Where her assailant trod her prostrate form.  
Such incidents are not rare, and in the eyes  
Of Pell street swains not incompatible  
With love and happiness. A stitch or two  
And strips of plaster exorcised the spectre  
Of Death at once.

While I was thus engaged,  
The visiting girls—part of the pitiful tribute  
That Cherry Hill pays the Mongolian dragon—  
Thus chattered of the cause: Said one, a blonde,  
Whose bright blue eyes still seemed to hold in them  
The look of innocence surprised which must  
Have frozen there after her first night there,  
"De Dood oughter do time fer dis," to which  
Libbie the Man, so called from her hard mien  
And manner, both too masculine, replied,  
"Ferget it. W'y'd she aggrivate him so?  
Say, didn't she took his flowers an' took de dress



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## Lays of Chinatown

---

He worked fer fer ter take her ter Chuck's ball,  
An' den she gib him de machette, too. Say,  
She jilted him fer dat squint-eyed baboon.  
'F I was a man, an' a goil did me dirt,  
I'd put me heel upon her mug."

"He knew  
De Chink was puttin' up fer her," replied  
Another. "Say, w'y don't he leave her go?"  
"Ah, Jim was always taggin' after her.  
Say, always on de corner of de street,  
Or at de stair foot. Maggie couldn't go  
Ter get a pint but Jimmy was at Scotty's  
Ter carry home de growler fer her."

"Say,  
Jimmie was tryin' ter steal her here from Chu,"  
Spoke up a third one, looking unabashed  
At the calm, careless, unreplying Chinese,  
"An' he got left. He ought ter stood it, sure,  
An' den said nuttin'. Say, t'ough, he was nutty  
After Mag fer fair."

"Well," added Libbie,  
"Dey bot' was promised when dey's boy an' goil  
Tergeder at St. James's, long enough  
Before she come here, an' her mot'er begged  
De Dood ter get her from dat yaller Chink."  
"He had no right ter smash her," said the first.  
"Say, if 'twas me, I'd cut his heart out fer it."  
"An' die in de electric chair?" sneered Libbie.  
"Ah, dat's played out fer wimmen, yer can bet,  
Since dat Dago, Barberi, got released."

The victim seemed to have no ears at all  
For her frank callers, and the Chinaman,

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

Caressing both her hands, appeared with her  
Entirely deaf to all, although, in sooth,  
He felt a wound from every word. But not  
Until my work drew nigh its end in speech  
Or look did he betray his wounded soul,  
Yet finally he gave his sorrow tongue,  
But in such tones as one would use to chide  
A loving, forward child. "W'y you so bad?  
Oh, w'y you meet that Ilish bum, at all?  
I gib you plenty money—no hab wolk;  
I gib you plesents for youself, you mammy,  
You little blothel. W'y tleat me so bad?"  
"Don't min' dem, Chu," she answered, more in wrath  
Than in repentance, and the Chinaman  
Continued: "Oh, you bleak my healt," and then  
Asked her again, "W'y you so bad?"

At this  
Libbie the Man took up the thread again  
Of stern reproof. She was one of those  
Who periodically are beset  
With moonlike change of conscience. As the orb  
Grows from the crescent into the full moon  
Only to die into a silver thread,  
So she lit an unprofitable flame  
That waxed and waned and waxed and waned again,  
But threw no living light upon her life  
To change its current. "'Twas dead wrong," she said,  
"To jolly Jim, de Dood. Yer knew de trut',  
Dat he was nutty fer yer."

"Oh, shut up,"  
Responded Maggie, "Now yer preachin', sure,  
But I don't see yer wearin' medals eit'er  
Fer yer good conduct."

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## Lays of Chinatown

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"I have seen yer, Maggie,  
On many evenin's huggin him as if  
Yer loved him deeply."

She could stand no more.  
The worm at last had turned. The final bandage  
Had been drawn snug, and Maggie felt at ease  
Throughout her physical being. She arose  
Upon her elbow at this final charge,  
And lifting up the plate of innocent grapes,  
She shied it at the head of her accuser—  
With feminine aim, however, for the fruit  
Alone showered down upon the coterie.  
The plate smashed harmlessly upon the wall.  
"Oh, ain't she vicious!" cried the golden blonde.  
"Now, git ter hell from here!" yelled Maggie, roused  
To tigerlike vindictiveness. Erect  
She rose, and glared at them a moment's space,  
Then stooping, raised a bed-slat from its place  
To emphasize her order. Libbie stood—  
No coward—to give fight. The other girls  
Together dragged her toward the door, while Chu  
Threw his strong arms 'round Maggie, and in tones  
Though soothing, firm, said: "No fight, little gell,  
No fight; Chu send 'em home."

"We'll all get pinched,"  
Some one cried out, "if we stay here. Let's go  
Down ter de Eel Pot." So they all ran down  
The creaking stairs into the open street.

Where Mott street joins the Bowery, as I turned,  
I saw the Dude, leaning with careless grace  
Against a lamp-post, thoughtful and alone,  
The hour past one. He was a Bowery type—

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## Lays of Chinatown

---

A sport in shirt sleeves, and high-collared neck  
'Round which his bright tie wound, a band of red.  
A rakish hat was tilted o'er his eyes.  
A cigarette, with intermittent fire,  
Upleaned to meet it from his stern set lips.  
His trousers and his waistcoat loud of check.  
His pointed shoes of russet, and a gern  
That glittered in the moonlight from his front.  
And band and fob his sobriquet upheld.  
"Say, Doc," he called, with confident effrontery,  
"Is she all right? I tell yer w'at it is,"  
He added, walking airily by my side,  
"I was dead stuck on Maggie, Doc, fer fair.  
Now, w'at yer t'ink of dis? Say, fer a month  
I have been a-workin' fer her, Doc; yes workin'  
Down in a cooper shop—ten plunks a week—  
An' all fer her. Doc, I've been savin' dough  
Ter fit a little flat up. On de level,  
I would have taken her before de Priest  
An' been dere reg'lar spliced, an' taken her home  
Unter me mudder. Hully gee, I would.  
An' she agreed. An' den she trun me down  
Fer dat damned banjo skinned, rat eatin' Chink—  
Wit' me good money in her stockin', too.  
Say, Doc, dat set me wild. I took ter drink.  
Got overflowin' wit' dat rotgut stuff  
Of Callahan's, or else I'd never licked her.  
But yer know w'at yer would have done yerself  
In such a case. A man can sympertise  
Wit' a man always, Doc. I sometimes fear,  
W'en all her promises rise in me min',  
An' I t'ink of me workin' an' givin' up  
De booze an' craps an' leg shows for her sake,  
Say, hully gee, I sometimes t'ink some day  
I'll go ter de electric chair fer her."

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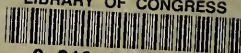
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